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A SUPER YEAR?

MASKED HEROES TAKING OVER THE BIG SCREEN

{page 12}

VANCOUVER metro®
Tuesday, January 3, 2012
www.metronews.ca
News worth sharing.

Game. Face

▶ Goalie Roberto Luongo stops a shot with the end of his stick against the San Jose Sharks during the second period at Rogers Arena on Monday. The Sharks won the game 3-2 in a shootout. Story, page 17.

RICH LAM/GETTY IMAGES

Canucks fall to Sharks in shootout

Dad, sons die in fire

Blaze that claimed the lives of man and two toddlers isn't considered suspicious

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
@METRONEWS.CA

FACEBOOK.COM

▶ This picture shows Kara Wagner and her two sons. The boys, along with their father, died in a fire on New Year's Day.

A father and his two young sons died on New Year's Day after a mobile home fire in Sicamous.

RCMP confirmed that a 28-year-old man and his two sons, aged three and four, died in the fire in the B.C. community east of Salmon Arm.

Police say the children's 25-year-old mother was not at home at the time of the blaze. Prayers, well wishes and support are pouring in on Facebook for Kara Wagner, whose children and fiancé were inside the mobile home.

Sicamous RCMP and the fire department responded to a house fire in the 1200 block of Green Road. The home was fully engulfed when firefighters and police arrived at around 7 p.m.

A neighbour, who asked not to be named, said she had seen the young family, but had never met them. She said she saw the flames go up from her bedroom window.

"We saw the fire truck come past our house," the elderly neighbour said Monday. "We're a little town and you check out the fire trucks and see where it's going and it went just a few houses down from our place. It was destroyed. It was completely burned."

Preliminary reports suggest the blaze was not suspicious. The B.C. Coroners Service and B.C. Fire Commissioners Office are now leading the investigation.

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Diner fries up last plate of eggs this week

After six decades of serving comfort food, Bert's Restaurant will dish up its last plate of pancakes and eggs this week.

The Main Street institution is closing its doors on Saturday after years of trying to adapt to the HST, the rise in the minimum wage and other changes in the restaurant industry.

"There were many factors, mainly the recession," owner Gerry De Kova said. "When we're hit by so many other factors, it really hurt us."

In explaining the closure of the 63-year-old restaurant, he also cited increases in food costs, property taxes and competition in the area.

De Kova was a longtime patron of the diner before purchasing it five years ago. "I've gotten to know everyone — all the customers and the staff. We're so close, we're like family. It's really a community within a community," he said.

Arlene Selsyk, who worked as a dishwasher at Bert's for 26 years, is sad to see it go. "It's been here for so long. It was like a second home to me."

"It's going to be strange not to see Bert's here," De Kova said. "A lot of people have memories here."

The diner will be transformed into another restaurant, he said.

KENDRA WONG

KENDRA WONG/FOR METRO

▶ Bert's opened in 1948 as a 24-hour coffee shop. In recent years it was known for its all-day breakfast.

'One of the most emotional nights of my life': Welfare challenge MLA

Jagrup Brar living on $610 this month Meetings with homeless at shelters leave deep impression

MATT KIELTYKA
@METRONEWS.CA

Jagrup Brar has already experienced some of the most emotional days of his life, just three days into a month-long welfare challenge.

The MLA for Surrey-Fleetwood began his journey on New Year's Day, vowing to live on the welfare rate of $610 for the month of January while visiting homeless shelters and other organizations to meet people living in poverty.

He knew the experience would be an eye opener, but he has been struck by some of the tragic stories he has already heard.

"The first night was one of the most emotional nights of my life," he says. "I know the numbers of homelessness, but they're just numbers. This is a real human-being experience."

He spent Sunday at the Front Room in Surrey, meeting many of the 50 homeless people spending the day there.

One client had lost his family in a car accident, starting him on a downward spiral toward homelessness. Another had lost his job after an amputation.

"It's easy to stereotype," Brar says. "What I saw is that living with poverty is hard and demoralizing. There are young people, seniors, women and men."

From Surrey, Brar went out Monday afternoon job-shadowing regional aboriginal outreach workers. By the end of the month, he hopes to have experienced many facets of poverty.

"I'm trying to tell a story of half a million people," he says. "I'm trying to reach as many people possible so I have — if not a full — a clear story."

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

▶ Surrey-Fleetwood MLA Jagrup Brar is living on $610 this month as he tries to gain a first-hand understanding of poverty.

City mourns Milton Wong

A memorial service for Vancouver philanthropist Milton Wong — who died of pancreatic cancer on New Year's Eve — will take place later this month.

"His contributions to B.C. and Canada are extraordinary," NDP Leader Adrian Dix said Monday. "We have lost a great civic leader, a role model that exemplified the best of our city and province."

CONTRIBUTED

▶ Milton Wong

Wong, who was 72, graduated from the University of British Columbia and founded the financial management firm M.K. Wong and Associates. Among his many contributions to the community, he was a mentor at UBC's Sauder School of Business and chancellor at SFU, and he also helped to establish Science World.

Premier Christy Clark praised Wong as a businessman "whose personal success was matched only by his caring for others."

JENNIFER KWOK

News in brief

Woman falls ill on ecstasy

BAD REACTION. An Abbotsford woman is fighting for her life after taking ecstasy with friends on New Year's Eve. Police said the woman, 24, was at a house party when she began to have a reaction to the drug and fell unconscious. She was rushed to hospital where she remains in critical condition. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS

Avalanche victim ID'd

PEMBERTON. The veteran skier who died in a backcountry avalanche near Pemberton last Thursday has been identified as Duncan MacKenzie, 30, RCMP said. He was a ski patroller at the Whistler Blackcomb resort.

KENDRA WONG

1 news

Montreal's revamped Cosmodome offers visitors a chance to explore the universe at a fraction of the $35-million cost of being a space tourist. Scan code for story.

To scan 2D barcodes in Metro, download the free ScanLife app at 2dscan.com.

On the web at metronews.ca

Edmonton photographer Paul Burwell explains how he creates his detailed and radiantly lit images of snowflakes. Video at metronews.ca/video

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Numbers tell the story

2011 was an unusual year for murders in Canada, with some areas setting records for most or fewest homicides Here's a look at all nine Metro Canada cities

Vancouver
Population: 578,000
The City of Vancouver saw 15 homicides in 2011. The final homicide in the city was the New Year's Eve stabbing death of 19-year-old Dylan Cody Smith at an apartment. In Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, there were 35 homicides in 2011, according to CBC.

15

Edmonton
Population: 730,000
Edmonton saw its deadliest year ever in 2011 — including two slayings in the final 24 hours, with a 35-year-old man and a woman in her 20s becoming the 46th and 47th homicide victims. The city, which led the country in homicides, surpassed its previous record of 39 from 2005.

47

Winnipeg
Population: 633,000
Winnipeg saw a record 39 homicides in 2011, up from the previous record of 34. The high number of killings was attributed to increasing gang violence and one instance where a woman allegedly set fire to a rooming house, killing five occupants.

39

Halifax
Population: 370,000
Homicides were up significantly for Halifax, with 17 throughout the municipality in 2011. That's six more than in 2010 and four more than the previous record of 13 from 2009. Most of the homicides weren't random, but in late November three teens were charged in the indiscriminate shooting of a Halifax-area senior out for a walk.

17

Montreal
Population: 1.6 million
Montreal saw 35 homicides on its territory in 2011, down two from 2010. In the province of Quebec, there were 102 homicides, an increase of 28 per cent.

35

Ottawa
Population: 812,000
Ottawa had 11 homicides in 2011. Four victims were women and the rest men. Knives were used in five of the cases. Three other victims were shot, all of whom were men with criminal ties. The shootings remain unsolved as do three other cases: in one case, the cause of death has not been released. Ottawa had 10 homicides in 2010.

11

Calgary
Population: 988,000
Early intervention and funding commitments from municipal and provincial governments are being touted as major factors in keeping Calgary's homicide number at 11, the lowest it's been in eight years. The final count is in stark contrast to killings at the height of the city's gang war in 2008 and 2009, when roughly three times the murders were recorded.

11

Toronto
Population: 2.5 million
Toronto recorded 46 murders in 2011, the lowest number in 25 years. This was the fourth straight year of declines since 2007, when the city recorded its deadliest year (matched in 1991) with 86 homicides. Police Chief Bill Blair attributed some of the decline to the disruption of gang activity following sweeping raids carried out across the region.

46

London
Population: 352,000
London police reported eight homicides in 2011 — up from seven in 2010 — the most murders on record since slayings spiked to 14 in 2005. The last murder was reported on Dec. 27, when Said Hadbai, 20, was found shot in a parking lot. He died in hospital.

8

METRO CANADA/ TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MOUNT RAINIER SHOOTING

Suspect in murder of U.S. park ranger found dead

An armed Iraq War veteran suspected of killing a Mount Rainier National Park ranger managed to evade snowshoe-wearing SWAT teams and dogs on his trail for nearly a day. He couldn't, however, escape the cold.

A plane searching the remote wilderness for Benjamin Colton Barnes, 24, yesterday discovered his body lying partially submerged in an icy, snowy mountain creek with snow banks standing several feet high on either side.

"He was wearing a T-shirt, a pair of jeans and one tennis shoe. That was it," Pierce County Sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer said.

Barnes did not have any external wounds and appears to have died from the elements, he said. A medical examiner was at the scene to determine the cause of death. Troyer said two weapons were recovered, but he declined to say where they were located.

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Anderson

PIERCE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT./THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Barnes

According to police and court documents, Barnes had a troubled transition to civilian life, with accusations in a child-custody dispute that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder following his Iraq deployments and was suicidal.

Barnes is believed to have fled to the remote park on Sunday to hide after an earlier shooting at a New Year's house party near Seattle that wounded four, two critically. Authorities suspect he then fatally shot ranger Margaret Anderson.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Man arrested in L.A. arson probe

Suspect is a German national
Federal authorities recognized him from immigration court: Police

Authorities arrested a German man yesterday in connection with dozens of suspected arson attacks that destroyed parked cars, scorched buildings and rattled much of the second-largest U.S. city over the New Year's weekend.

Harry Burkhart, 24, was booked for investigation of arson of an inhabited dwelling and was being held without bail, authorities said. Police said he told arresting officers he's from Frankfurt.

Burkhart was arrested earlier in the day because he resembled a "person of interest" captured on surveillance video. He was stopped by a reserve sheriff's deputy in a van being sought by arson investigators, who did not rule out the possibility that others may be involved.

More than 50 blazes have flared since Friday in Hollywood, neighbouring West Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley, causing about $3 million in damage.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAN STEINBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Los Angeles Fire Department firefighters extinguish numerous cars on fire in a carport in the Sherman Oaks neighbourhood of Los Angeles yesterday.

More officers charged in Grenada beating death

"People who know Grenada ... will tell you that Grenada is the safest destination in the Caribbean."
TILLMAN THOMAS, PRIME MINISTER OF GRENADA

Three more Grenada police officers were charged with manslaughter on Sunday in the beating death of a Canadian as the country's prime minister insisted the case isn't indicative of the Caribbean island's law enforcement.

"This is really an isolated case, it's unfortunate," Prime Minister Tillman Thomas told The Canadian Press in a phone interview from his home Sunday night.

A police statement said officers Edward Gibson, Shaun Ganness and Ruddy Felix were arrested and charged Sunday in the beating death of 39-year-old Oscar Bartholomew of Toronto, who was visiting the island about 160 kilometres north of Venezuela to see family. The Sunday arrests brought the number of police suspects to five. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Mubarak charges could be dropped

Acquittal of policemen accused of killing protesters raises speculation about former Egyptian president

MOHAMMED AL-LAW/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak is wheeled into a Cairo courthouse on Monday to face charges of complicity in the killing of protesters last year.

The trial of Hosni Mubarak resumed in Cairo on Monday amid speculation that a recent acquittal of policemen tried in the killings of protesters could be a prelude to the dismissal of charges against the ousted Egyptian leader.

Mubarak, 83, is accused of complicity in the killing of more than 800 protesters during the uprising that toppled his 29-year regime last year.

He was brought by helicopter to the Cairo courthouse from a hospital where he is held in custody. He was then taken into the defendants' cage on a gurney.

Another Cairo court on Thursday acquitted five policemen of charges of killing five protesters during the uprising last Jan. 25 to Feb. 11. The court said three of the defendants were not at the site of the killings while the other two fired on protesters in self defence.

The ruling angered families of the victims. Activists demanded justice and complained that similar cases are languishing in courts in several Egyptian cities. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Show. Of strength

▶ Iranian naval officers celebrate after the successful launch of a Ghader missile at the shore of the Gulf of Oman during a drill on Monday.

HAMED JAFARNEJAD/ FARS NEWS AGENCY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iranian navy test-fires cruise missile

Iran test-fired a surface-to-surface cruise missile during a drill that Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said proved Tehran was in complete control of the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the passageway for one-sixth of the world's oil supply. Tehran has threatened to close the strait as retaliation for new U.S. economic sanctions.

Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to resume

Israeli and Palestinian envoys will meet in Jordan on Tuesday in a last-ditch effort to salvage peace talks, the first time the sides are meeting since negotiations collapsed in September 2010. But Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, warned that, without a breakthrough, the Palestinians will likely abandon the process and could try again for recognition at the UN. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wildfires rage across southern Chile

Firefighters in Chile battled three huge wildfires on Monday that have burned about 23,000 hectares of forest, destroyed more than 100 homes and driven away thousands of tourists while causing millions of dollars in losses.

The fires also claimed their first victim: An elderly man who ignored warnings to leave his home.

Chile's normally rainy southern regions are feeling the effects of a nationwide heat wave and drought. Red alerts were declared for the regions of Magallanes, Bio Bio and Maule.

In the Bio Bio region, the timber industry is threatened by fire that destroyed an Arauco company paper mill. Hundreds of people who left their homes were forced to relocate yet again early Monday as the flames advanced.

In Magallanes, more than seven per cent of the famed Torres del Paine national park had burned, ruining vacations for some of the 150,000 tourists who come each year during the brief southern summer.

An Israeli tourist, Rotem Singer, 23, has denied a charge of negligently starting the Torres del Paine fire. But a Santiago prosecutor said Singer's travelling companions said he set fire to toilet paper after going to the bathroom, and then failed to put it out completely. If convicted, he faces up to two months in jail. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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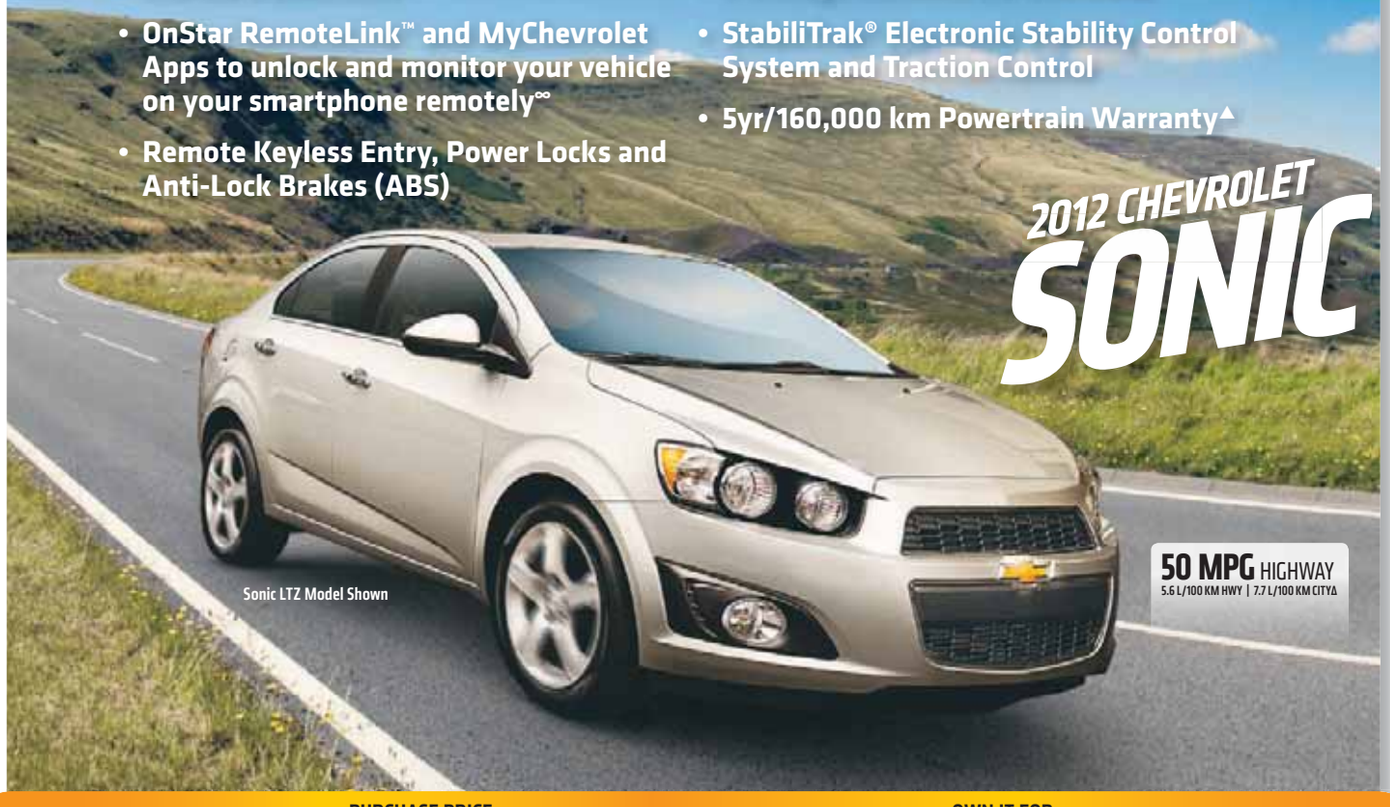

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Media mogul tweets his 2012 resolutions

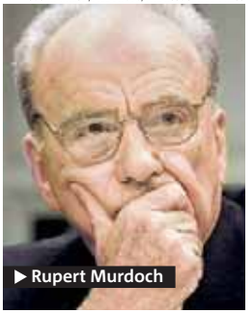
- 80-year-old Murdoch joins Twitter for the new year
- More than 46,000 followers by Monday morning

Rupert Murdoch has begun the new year by setting up in a new field of communications. He's started tweeting.

The media mogul, who is recovering from perhaps his most difficult year in the business, is posting on Twitter under the handle @rupertmurdoch, spokeswoman Daisy Dunlop at News International confirmed Monday.

The account was opened over the New Year's holiday, but many doubted its authenticity because Murdoch, 80, has generally tried to stay out of the spotlight as his media empire comes under increased scrutiny because of widespread phone hacking at his U.K. newspapers.

SUSAN WALSH/FILE PHOTO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



▶ Rupert Murdoch

"My resolutions, try to maintain humility and always curiosity," he tweets. "And of course diet!"

His wife Wendi Deng has also started tweeting — she's @wendi-deng — referring to the setbacks: "A lot of bad things happened in 2011 but I hope in 2012 we can put them all behind us and sail on to a bright future for everyone Wxx."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market moment

PRICES AS OF 5 P.M. FRIDAY

TSX	Dollar
+ 113.4 (11,955.09)	+ 0.37¢ (98.33¢ US)

Oil	Natural gas	Gold
- 82¢ US ($98.83 US)	$2.989 (- 3.8¢)	$1,566.80 (+ $25.90)

Gas. Up

▶ An attendant sells fuel at a petrol station in Lagos, Nigeria, Monday.

SUNDAY ALAMBA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nigeria's gas prices may fuel unrest

Nigeria is ending fuel subsidies, an official said Sunday, a move that is sure to be unpopular in the oil-rich nation where citizens see cheap fuel as one of their few government benefits. Two union groups are threatening strikes and protests.

Pipeline top of election agenda

President Barack Obama and Congress are starting the election year locked in a tussle over a proposed 2,735-kilometre oil pipeline that will force the White House to make a risky choice between two Democratic constituencies.

Labour unions say the pipeline would create thousands of jobs. Environmentalists fear it could lead to an oil spill disaster.

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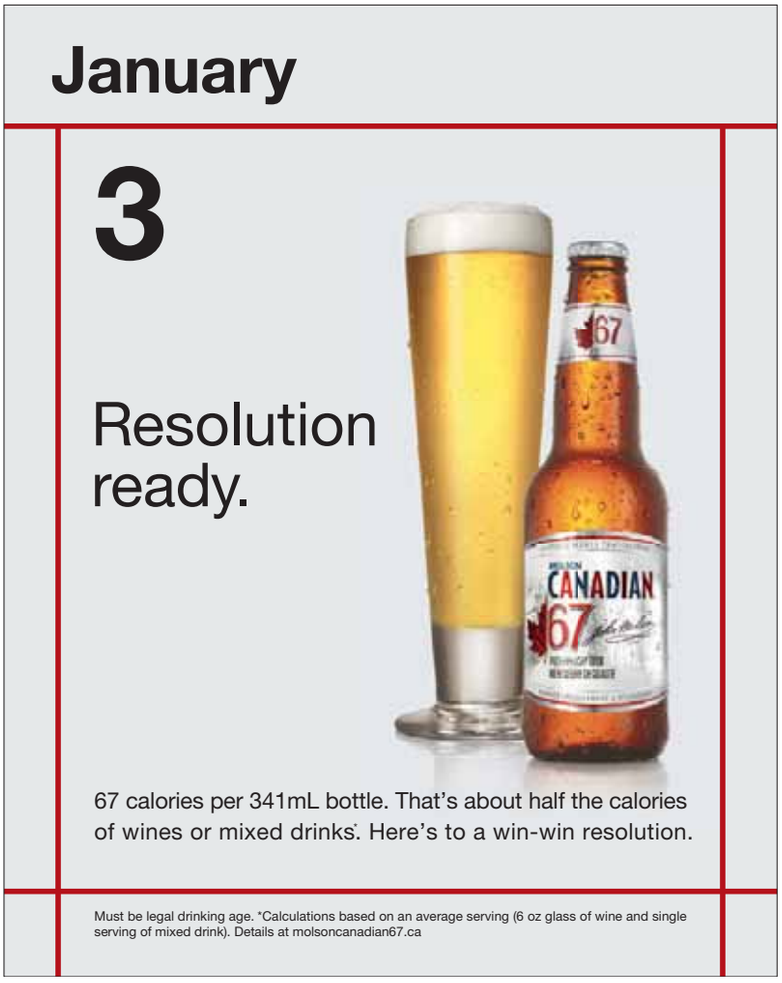
January
3
Resolution ready.
67 calories per 341mL bottle. That's about half the calories of wines or mixed drinks*. Here's to a win-win resolution.
Must be legal drinking age. *Calculations based on an average serving (6 oz glass of wine and single serving of mixed drink). Details at molsoncanadian67.ca

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While we always love to share student success stories, on occasion one really stands out, surprising even us. This year we want to recognize ***Marc Ramsey*** *for providing our student success story of the year. Marc hit the ground running when he started working with MMG last spring. He has completed three flips including a high-rise luxury condo and a house that has been fully rehab-ed. Even more impressive is his most recent accomplishment.Marc just purchased a 44 unit apartment complex with three separate buildings for a mere $150,000. Once the rehab is completed, Marc will still be under $500,000. This will give him a stabilized asset of one MILLION DOLLARS with a NOI of over $200,000 per year. We cannot express how proud we are of Marc's accomplishment and are thrilled that MMG was able to help him realize his financial dreams.*

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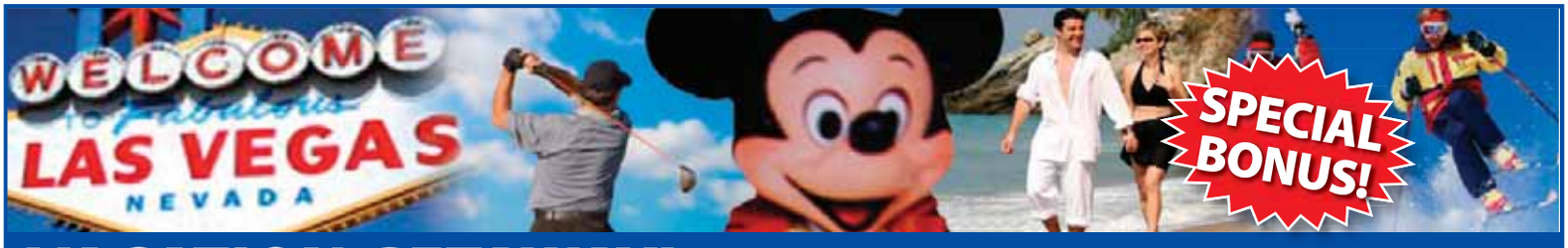
Extreme Price Reduction
$34,000

Condo in Las Vegas
2 bed, 2 bath
Extreme Price Reduction
$29,900



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12 RESOLUTIONS WORTH KEEPING FOR 2012

SHE SAYS ...

JESSICA NAPIER
METRO

So have you broken all your new year's resolutions yet? Of course you have. Now forget those lofty ambitions that would have you forsake all your vices simultaneously, and let's try to focus on setting some small goals for the new year.

I've taken the liberty of compiling a list of 12 entirely achievable resolutions that I'd like you (yes YOU) to make and keep for 2012. Don't worry, I promise to try my best to adhere to them as well. After all, even a few minor changes can make the world a much better place for me, you and everyone we know.

1 I will stop Keeping Up with the Kardashians once and for all and spend more time with my own family.

2 I will stand right and walk left on escalators.

3 I will stop doing that thing where I see an acquaintance on the street and pretend I don't know them. We both know what's going on; let's just stop being awkward and say hello.

4 I will take better care of my hair because someday I might lose it all.

5 The same thing goes for my money.

6 I will resist the urge to Like a Facebook status update about an engagement or pregnancy in order to prevent a never-ending stream of annoying comment notifications in the days that follow.

7 I will stop letting the smug woman behind the GPS navigation voice jeopardize my relationship, and surrender to the fact that maybe she does know best.

8 I will recognize that the only things that belong on the dinner table are food and cutlery, not my cellphone.

9 I will stop blaming public transit for my late arrival at the office every single morning and admit to myself (and my boss) that maybe I should be getting up 10 minutes earlier. Alternatively, I will think of some new excuses for my tardiness.

10 I will buy the $14 bottle of wine, not the $9 bottle. Yes, I want to save money, but the 12-hours-from-now version of me will appreciate my largesse.

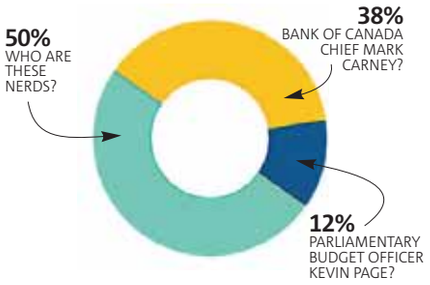
11 I will listen to my mother and wear the appropriate footwear for the weather conditions.

12 I will actually pay attention to the auto-correct function on my phone and stop sending embarrassing typo-filled messages to friends and family. After all, "Did you show your boss?" is a very different question than "Did you show your boobs?"

Read more of Jessica Napier's columns at metronews.ca/shesays

Metropolitan Panel
Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Who would win a telepathic battle of smartness?



Local tweets

- **@geroysimon:** Ok ok ok ready for some football! Rose Bowl time. Let's see these unis Oregon's wearing that everyone keeps talking about.
- **@MetroVancouver:** If you don't have a green bin, most places where you bought your tree will have a drop off day.
- **@D_Booth7:** And Finkle just booted it! Watching outback bowl msu in ot!! #gospartys
- **@VanCanucks:** Booth on ice in #Vancouver this morning, skating on his own.
- **@CityofVancouver:** What's your new year's resolution? How about volunteering for a civic agency? Apply from Jan.3-22. ow.ly/84kvN
- **@michellesplant:** @VanCanucks Congrats to Cody Hodgson for being runner up as NHL's rookie of the month!!!
- **@LeighBrandt:** And here comes the rain! Lol of course, its #vancouver
- **@VancityBuzz:** If you love chocolate read this! #Vancouver has the Number 1 spot for Chocolate in the world!! ow.ly/8fY2h

Daily Zoom

BINSAR BAKKARA PHOTOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Half of country's rainforests lost

Orphaned baby orangutans Septian and Seroja play inside a basket at a Conservation Programme facility in Batu Mbelin, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Indonesia has lost half of its rainforests in the last half century, putting the remaining 50,000 to 60,000 orangutans living in scattered, degraded forests in frequent, and often deadly, conflict with humans.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Living in a concrete jungle

Veterinarians conduct surgery on an estimated 40-year-old orangutan named Puyul, who suffers from a broken leg, at their facility in Batu Mbelin, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Puyul broke his leg falling from a tree while being rescued by conservationists after he was found roaming a rubber plantation too close to a village. The vets also found air-rifle-pellet wounds in Puyul's body.

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Blasting gender roles

Bomb Girls is a new series that celebrates the strength of the women who worked in munitions factories during the Second World War ◆ Oscar nominee Meg Tilly plays the factory's supervisor

ANNE BRODIE
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA

In 1995, Oscar nominee Meg Tilly left Hollywood to write, and raise her family, including a son with Colin Firth.

She's back in a passion project, Bomb Girls, set in an Ajax, Ont., munitions factory during the Second World War.

Tilly relishes her role as Lorna, whose abusive husband returned from the war paralyzed and who supervises the girls on the factory line.

Tilly sat down with Metro to talk about Bomb Girls and gender issues that are still relevant in 2012.

"I have my little chickadees to look after on Bomb Girls," says Tilly.

"Everyone's younger than me and there's all this female power. It's very sweet.

"I feel so privileged to work in this environment. How often can you walk back in a chunk of time and explore it and life in it and love it?

"There is also such good will for this show. It was a brave choice to do such an unlikely look at the Second World War. The women had their jobs and husbands overseas but they were fighting behind the lines to protect their men and their children at home. They were soldiers."

HANDOUT

▶ Meg Tilly, shown in blue, says the reason she left acting was to give her children a chance to have a normal childhood.

Lorna is nurturing yet stern in this dangerous place, where one spark from a ring or hairpin could blow it sky high.

I wanted that, "Whoa, she's tough!" But why is she tough? If someone makes a decision you don't agree with you have to understand the whys. It's her job to keep the factory safe.

She doesn't want some dilettante coming here who could kill them all. I love the humanness of the characters, more noble than they realize.

One of her charges is Gladys, a headstrong Rosedale debutante played by Jodi Balfour. Gladys works in the office but dreams of joining the line, even as her father demands that she quit and marry. Balfour says the series reflects social realities that still exist.

These issues never become irrelevant. We may have come a long way in gender issues since the war and the overt discrimination, but those things still exist.

We have the resources to do something about them. Gender stereotypes discriminating against women can be dealt with; there are channels you can process these things through now.

But it doesn't mean attitudes have changed.

Balfour says the series inspired nostalgia for a time she never knew.

Entirely, but I've been like that all my life. I've always felt I was born into the wrong era. I relate so much to this way of being, the chivalry of it all.

It wasn't an easy time to be a woman and I am nostalgic for it. I feel I missed out on the best time to be alive.

And being wartime, they sucked the marrow out of every day.

Bomb Girls, starring Meg Tilly and Jodi Balfour, starts Wednesday night on Global.

Why Meg Tilly quit acting

I took my kids, always, on films. My daughter was in the third grade and I took her when I did Leaving Normal. When we went back, her best friend was best friends with someone else and there were only seven girls in the class and she didn't have anyone to eat lunch with and she cried. I thought this is why a lot of actors mess up. Coming from a challenging childhood, I didn't want to leave my kids with someone else. If I took them away with me six or seven months a year they wouldn't have any kind of life. I realised what would pay me the most for the least amount of time, so I did TV, guest stints and saved the money, socked it away and when I had enough, I quit.

DVD Releases

Buy it ◍◍◍◍◍ | **Rent it** ◍◍◍◍ **Borrow it** ◍◍◍ | **Yawn** ◍◍ | **Don't bother** ◍

Contagion
Genre: Thriller
Director: Steven Soderbergh
Stars: Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Jude Law
◍◍½

Steven Soderbergh's Contagion is the feel-bad movie of 2011. A star-studded thriller, it's reminiscent of 1970s disaster movies, yet it's more grounded in reality. The film details the rapid spread of a lethal new virus, MEV-1, and does so quite realistically, at least until an outbreak of maudlin illogic near the end.

Working as his own cinematographer from a script by screenwriter Scott Z. Burns (The Bourne Ultimatum), Soderbergh spares few sensibilities in outlining how quickly a contagion would cross international boundaries.

Gwyneth Paltrow is Patient Zero, a business traveller named Beth Emhoff, who is intriguingly introduced on Day Two of her swiftly developing infection — we don't immediately know what happened on Day One. Whatever Beth caught on a trip to China is now returning home with her to Minnesota, where her new husband, Mitch (Matt Damon), and young son are waiting to welcome her home.

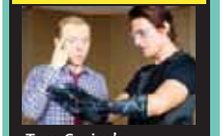
Beth is barely through the door when crisis strikes. As Mitch struggles to take in what's happened to his family, governments attempt to grasp an escalating infection rate and body count as scientists search for a vaccine.

At times, Soderbergh seems to lose track of too many subplots that include a kidnapping, marital infidelity, a government inquiry and a father-daughter trek. But Contagion demonstrates he still has it in him to deliver a mainstream movie. Just don't forget to Purell before watching. Extras include making-of featurettes.

PETER HOWELL

2 scene

Box office



Tom Cruise's new mission remains impossible to beat at the box office. Studio estimates Sunday placed Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol in the No. 1 spot for the second-straight weekend with $38.3 million. With a $141.2 million domestic total, it's the first $100 million hit with Cruise in the lead role since 2006's Mission: Impossible III. The movie led a solid New Year's weekend as Hollywood managed fair business to end a sluggish year on a more promising note for 2012. Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows finished second again with $26.5 million, raising its domestic total to $132.1 million. The family sequel Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked was still at No. 3 with $21 million to lift it to $94.6 million.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin film festival to honour Meryl Streep for career achievements.

ALL PHOTOS HANDOUTS

▶ The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey is probably the most anticipated film of 2012. Peter Jackson and old friends reunite in this prequel, which is due in December.

Year of the superhero?

From comic book films to literary adaptations, 2012 looks very promising

The Dark Knight Rises
We're just as curious to see how Christopher Nolan rounds out his trilogy of Batman films — he insists this is the final chapter — as we are to see if The Dark Knight Rises can come close to matching the $1 billion that 2008's The Dark Knight pulled in worldwide. Christian Bale is back as Batman, along with Michael Caine as Alfred and Gary Oldman as Commissioner Gordon, and for this go round they're joined by newcomers Tom Hardy (as Bane) and Catwoman Anne Hathaway. Due in July. NED EHRBAR

The Avengers
After great turns in their own films in 2011, Captain America (Chris Evans) and Thor (Chris Hemsworth) join up with Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.), Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson), Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) and the Hulk (Mark Ruffalo) for the ensemble flick Marvel Studios has been building to since Samuel L. Jackson popped up after the credits of 2008's Iron Man. And while the first trailer might just look like an ad for Iron Man 3, having director Joss Whedon (Buffy the Vampire Slayer) at the helm is keeping hopes high. Due in May.

The Hunger Games and Twilight finale
With the Twilight saga wrapping up at the end of 2012, all eyes are on Lionsgate's adaptation of Suzanne Collins' bestselling teen dystopia to fill the void. There are three books in the Hunger Games series, but if the first movie is a hit, don't be surprised if the latter chapters start getting split up into multiple films. Jennifer Lawrence stars. Due in March.

Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter and World War Z
In the first, due in June, the secret vampire-slaying past of America's 16th president is revealed. But blood-suckers aren't the only ghouls getting a workout. Based on the bestselling book by Max (son of Mel) Brooks, World War Z features Brad Pitt and Lost star Matthew Fox facing the aftermath of a worldwide zombie apocalypse. Fun for the whole family at holiday time! Due in December.

Brave
Pixar seemed to take 2011 off with Cars 2 — while it would've been fine for most animation studios, it wasn't quite up to Pixar standards — but the company behind Toy Story and Up looks to return to form with their latest, the Scotland-set Brave. The film is about a feisty lass (Kelly Macdonald) looking to slay dragons and undue a curse to save her people. Due in June.

The Amazing Spider-Man
Exactly 10 years after Tobey Maguire first crawled up his first wall, the web-slinger saga is starting over, this time with Andrew Garfield (The Social Network) suiting up as Spider-Man and director Marc Webb (500 Days of Summer) behind the camera. The new version promises to be darker and grittier than the last run, but with Spider-Man 3 just five years behind it, will audiences be interested in the franchise reboot? Due in July.

Skyfall
After a few financial hiccups on the studio side, James Bond fans rejoiced when the latest 007 adventure — and Daniel Craig's third as the British super-spy — went into production a few weeks ago. We're particularly excited to see what director Sam Mendes does with the revitalized franchise. Due in October.

Prometheus
While he's gone off to make all sorts of different types of films — most of them starring Russell Crowe — Ridley Scott is still revered for his pair of sci-fi masterpieces, Alien and Blade Runner. With Prometheus, he returns to the genre with a big, spooky space flick that ties in somehow to the Alien franchise — just don't call it a prequel. And if that's not enough to get you excited, how about a cast including Michael Fassbender, Charlize Theron and Idris Elba? Due in June.

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Brand and Perry: What happened?

THE WORD

DOROTHY ROBINSON
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA

Without knowing either of the stars, please join me as I wildly speculate what drove Brand to file divorce papers last week.

Too much, too soon:
The two met in 2008 on the set of Brand's comedy Get Him to the Greek. After meeting again at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2009, the two started dating and it was infatuation at first sight.

Just four short months later, the two got engaged.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

▶ Russell Brand and Katy Perry

Perry was just 25.

The two got married at a tiger sanctuary in India eight months later.

Different lifestyles
Brand is a famous former heroin and sex addict, as well as a recovering alcoholic — and is now sober and likes to stay in, watching soccer.

Katy Perry sings songs about blacking out on Friday nights — and likes to party with people like Rihanna. Oh, and Perry's family are evangelical Christians. And, well, Brand is a recovering heroin, sex and booze addict.

The fame game
This has been the busiest year for Katy Perry — she became the first woman, and second artist overall following Michael Jackson, in the 53-year history of the Billboard Hot 100 to send five songs from an album to No. 1 with her sophomore effort Teenage Dream. She went on a massive tour, performed at most awards shows, and debuted a rainbow of new hair colours.

Brand starred in Arthur. Enough said.

Celebrity tweets

@aplusk
In 2012 let's agree to a resolution to feel one another's pain & joy, & create the peace we desire through proactive generosity. XO ak

@lindsaylohan
It's good to sit with yourself and have alone time

@kelly_clarkson
5:30 AM is definitely too early to have to wake up.

@AlbertBrooks
My New Year's resolution was to stop tweeting.

Matthew McConaughey pops the big question

It only took five years and two children together, but Matthew McConaughey is now sure he wants to settle down with Camila Alves.

"Just asked Camila to marry me. Merry Christmas," McConaughey posted on his WhoSay page on Christmas Day, accompanied by a photo of the pair kissing.

There's no word on when the wedding will take place, but chances are the happy couple aren't in any hurry.

METRO

Saldana and Cooper: It's on

After splitting with her fiancé of 11 years in November, Zoe Saldana has reportedly moved on to People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive, Bradley Cooper, according to E! News.

"They are totally dating," a source says of the pair, who co-star in the upcoming film The Words.

The source adds that the pair are trying to keep their budding relationship under wraps.

METRO

▶ Zoe Saldana

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Resolutions can wait... until after dessert.
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Germs

A study by researchers at Laval University found that bacteria thrives on paper products and even on unused paper towels. Research into bacterial transmission from paper towels has not previously been well documented.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Study finds nearly quarter of women get a prenatal thyroid check

ISTOCK PHOTO

▶ It's that time of year when we set resolutions in place.

Plan, not procrastinate

New Year's resolutions are plentiful right now To make them stick, start making a plan

CELIA MILNE
LIFE@METRONEWS.CA

Want to lose weight by getting fit? Put it in your calendar.

Most New Year's resolutions fail because they are too lofty and vague. "Exercise more" is a tough instruction to follow. Where would you begin? Scientific studies have found people are more likely to be physically active if they make a realistic and detailed action plan.

Your action plan might look like this: "Monday: walk at the mall 7 p.m. for half an hour, medium intensity." Wednesday's plan could be: "Lift weights, at home, 8 a.m., 20 minutes, three repetitions." And Friday's plan could be: "Boot camp, at the gym, 5:30 p.m., 45 minutes, full intensity." On Saturday? Get outside and have fun.

"Baby steps are important," says Sammie Kennedy, the creator and CEO of Booty Camp Fitness, a growing company dedicated to helping women get active.

"When you make smaller changes over time, it becomes less overwhelming and you are more likely to gain positive momentum from actually achieving your small goals. You feel positive, you see results and you are far more likely to be successful in your larger, long-term goals."

Boot camps are growing in popularity because they are a fun and social way to lose weight and get fit. Booty Camp Fitness, which is run by women for women, has nearly 100 locations across Canada, including British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick. Kennedy has observed that the most successful clients in her eight-week boot camps are those who declare their goals, attend class regularly and make small lifestyle changes they can stick with in their daily lives.

Get fit

Here's three tips for starting the New Year off right.

- **Start slow** Work your way up from exercising twice a week to as many days as you would like to achieve.
- **Change it up** Add something new/different to your fitness routine once a month.
- **Food is important** Eat a nutritious breakfast every morning.

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Black is the new brown

Kick off your New Year's diet with an amino acid rich lunch ▶ West-end sushi joint Akira offers black rice for a healthy, inexpensive sushi alternative

LUNCH RUSH

ERIN IRELAND
FOOD@METRONEWS.CA

December has come and gone, and so has the eggnog (among other edible traditions that are consumed in mass quantities thanks to the great excuse: "It's the holidays!").

Like a hangover, January has arrived. Simultaneously, New Year's diets have begun. But, lunchtime diners fear not: There are endless healthy options out there. And remember, you can always modify your order.

Hole-in-the-wall sushi joint Akira is an ideal option, with its low-calorie, high-protein dishes.

ERIN IRELAND

▶ Assorted Sushi

Akira Sushi
1069 Denman St.
604-806-6321
Hours: Mon.-Sun. - 10 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.
Price range: $7-$20
Licensed: Yes
Rating: 3.5 out of 5

Opt for the rare black rice (instead of standard white), go easy on the mayo (or cut it out), and choose low sodium soy sauce.

Try the Assorted Sushi with a six-piece California roll and one piece each of salmon, tuna, ebi, tobiko, tako and tai — expect fresh fish! And don't forget to ask for black rice ($0.75 extra).

Other tasty but healthy options include Tuna Takaki with avocado ($7.50) and Mango Paradise without mayo ($10.95).

NEWS CANADA

BLT Egg Wrap

Ingredients:
- Slice chicken or turkey bacon, cooked
- Egg
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) onion powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Low-fat flour tortilla
- 2 tsp (10 mL) fat-free mayonnaise
- Leaf lettuce
- 1 tbsp (30 mL) tomato, diced

Preparation:

1. Cook bacon in non-stick skillet over medium heat until crisp. Set aside; wipe skillet.
2. Whisk together egg, onion powder, salt and pepper in small bowl. Pour into skillet; cook, stirring slightly, over medium heat.
3. Cook until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains. Spread tortilla with mayonnaise. Place lettuce on top; add bacon, egg and tomato. Fold wrap and serve. **NEWS CANADA**

Roasted cauliflower florets

Ingredients:
- 2 heads cauliflower (about 2 kg or 4 ½ lb)
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) olive oil, or more if needed
- 10 mL (2 tsp) kosher salt, or more to taste
- Fried caper vinaigrette
- Minced country ham for garnish (optional)

Preparation:

1. Heat oven to 200 C (400 F). Set a wire rack over a baking sheet.
2. Cut tops of cauliflower into large florets. Place florets in a large bowl and drizzle with olive oil, then toss. Sprinkle with salt and toss again.
3. Place florets on rack. Roast for 30 minutes. Use tongs to turn florets, then roast for 15 to 20 minutes or until deeply caramelized.
4. Return florets to the bowl and, while still hot, toss with a little of the fried caper vinaigrette. Add just enough vinaigrette to lightly coat.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fried Caper Vinaigrette

Ingredients:
- 150 mL (⅔ cup) olive oil
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) salt-cured capers, rinsed and chopped
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped shallots
- 5 mL (1 tsp) grated garlic (about 2 cloves)
- 75 mL (⅓ cup) red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar
- 5 mL (1 tsp) whole-grain Dijon mustard
- Pinch sea salt and ground black pepper

Preparation:

1. In a medium sauté pan over medium heat, heat 50 mL (¼ cup) of the oil. Add capers, shallots and garlic, then cook, stirring constantly, for 2 to 4 minutes, or until just starting to brown but the oil is still clear. Transfer to a medium bowl, including all of the cooking oil, and set aside to cool.
2. Once mixture has cooled, add vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper. While whisking, drizzle in remaining oil. Whisk until thoroughly blended. Adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper, if necessary, and use immediately or refrigerate in a tightly sealed container for up to 2 days. Tip: Salt-cured capers should always be rinsed with cold water before being used.

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YOUR NET WORTH

FUN AND FRUGAL

LESLEY SCORGIE
MONEY@METRONEWS.CA

I love setting financial goals for the new year. But over the years I've learned to pare back to just one or two that I can really focus on, rather than 10 smaller ones.

Take 60 seconds and think about what you'd like to change about your financial health in 2012.

The most popular areas are debt reduction, frugal living and investing.

All three of these elements contribute to your overall net worth; what you have left over when your total liabilities are subtracted from your total asset.

Where does your net worth stand? And no, your car isn't considered an asset so scratch it off the list.

Set a net worth goal this year. So, if your net worth is currently $12,500, aim to increase it through debt reduction and asset growth to $20,000 by the end of 2012.

Hands down, the most effective ways to reduce debt are to make your payments automatically on the day you get paid, pay a little extra each month (even $10 makes a difference), and negotiate your interest rates so that you pay as little interest as possible.

The most effective ways to increase your assets are to save through an employer sponsored RRSP, pension or savings program.

If you've been sitting on the fence about home ownership, stop renting and build equity in your own home. But, this only makes sense if your cash flow can handle it.

Living a frugal life minding your dollars and cents will help you accomplish your goals. **FOR LESLEY SCORGIE'S FULL COLUMN VISIT METRONEWS.CA**

Befriend your finances

ON MONEY

ALISON GRIFFITHS
MONEY@METRONEWS.CA

This is an important day for me. My new book Count on Yourself: Take Charge of Your Money (Simon & Schuster Canada) is now in stores and available online. This marks book number 11 (the rest co-authored with David Cruise) so you wouldn't think I'd find it such a big deal any more.

But I do and it's because the topic has never been so important. With the economic events of the past few years, our increasing debt load and the terrible state of so many retirement portfolios and savings plans — we must start taking charge of our money.

You don't need to be good in math or even comfortable with numbers in order to do so. All that's required is a plan.

It's particularly vital for us to seize control in the realm of investing. Most people hand over decisions about what they buy for RRSPs, RESPs, RRIFs and TFSAs to someone else because they are intimidated.

The financial services industry has done a superb job of convincing us that investing is way too complicated for the average Joe and Jill. Not so!

My goal in Count on Yourself is to give you the confidence and tools to set up and monitor a simple, safe, low-fee investment portfolio — and the best news is that it will out-perform most professionally constructed portfolios.

The first part of the book explores our attitudes toward money and how they stop us from taking charge of our money. The second section offers tips to help you become financially organized while the third shows you how to evaluate your situation and needs.

"The financial services industry has done a superb job of convincing us that investing is way too complicated for the average Joe and Jill. Not so!"

Finally, I introduce you to a group of low-fee, low stress and easily understandable sample portfolios using Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) and index mutual funds.

When you're finished you will be in control of your money whether you use an advisor or prefer to do it yourself.

After the initial setup it will only take 30 minutes a month to stay on top of your investments.

There's also a contest to win a one-on-one telephone consult with yours truly about anything to do with personal finance or investments. You can enter through the Count on Yourself link on my website, alisongriffiths.ca.

Happy New Year all and I hope 2012 becomes a take-charge-of-your-money year.

ALISON GRIFFITHS IS THE AUTHOR OF COUNT ON YOURSELF: TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY. REACH HER AT ALISONGRIFFITHS.CA OR GRIFFITHS.ALISON@GMAIL.COM.

BEING PROACTIVE TO PREVENT THE POOP

CHARLES THE BUTLER

ASKCHARLES THEBUTLER@ METRONEWS.CA

FOR MORE, VISIT CHARLES MACPHERSON.COM

Mr. MacPherson,
I recently moved into a new home, and was disappointed to find at least a dozen "housewarming gifts" from the neighbour's dog in our backyard. Being the new kid on the block, I do not want to make waves so quickly and am hesitant to have my introduction to the neighbours be in the form of a complaint. How can I tactfully ask them to prevent their dog from targeting my lawn — or, at least to pick up afterwards?
Best wishes,
JB

Dear JB,

Wow! Not the "housewarming gift" you expected I'm sure! However let's think about this for a few minutes. Firstly, I would do nothing about the dog visiting your backyard (other than clean up the mess to start with), and secondly, I would make sure that my fence is in good order, with no holes, etc.

Now, how about taking the initiative and introducing yourself to your neighbour. This would allow you to start a friendly neighbourly relationship so that if, worst-case scenario, their dog does come into your yard, you will be in a much better and more comfortable position to approach them to deal with the issue. Good luck, and let us know how it turns out!

HAVE A QUESTION? EMAIL CHARLES AT ASKCHARLESTHEBUTLER@METRONEWS.CA.

ISTOCK

▶ Let's hope this guy cleans up after his dog.

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Canadians cautious as flu bug hits coaches

Canada's coaches needed a day without a game at the world junior hockey championship more than the players did.

Head coach Don Hay and assistant Scott Walker weren't on the ice for the practice Monday. The two were sequestered in the team hotel with the flu.

Assistant coaches George Burnett and Ryan Huska ran drills at Canada Olympic Park as the Canadians prepared for Tuesday's semifinal in Calgary.

Canada will face Russia, which defeated the Czech Republic 2-1 in Monday's quarter-final.

Huska expected Hay to be behind Canada's bench Tuesday night in a game that will determine which country plays for gold.

"Don, he'll be back," Huska said. "We're just taking all the precautions we can right now."

After going 4-0 to win Pool B, the Canadians had two straight days without a game and a bye to the semifinal. Sweden won Pool A with a 2-0-2 record and also had Monday off while Russia, the Czechs, Finland and Slovakia played quarter-final contests.

It's worrisome for the Canadians that the flu bug has struck. Forward Michael Bournival sat out last week's game against Denmark because of it, although he was back in the lineup for Saturday's 3-2 win over the U.S. in Edmonton. THE CANADIAN PRESS

JOHN ULAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

"It'll probably help bring us closer together and remind us to take care of ourselves even more, so I think we'll be ready for the game (Tuesday)."

CENTRE FREDDIE HAMILTON ON HOW TEAM CANADA WILL BATTLE THROUGH THE FLU BUG

Winter. Classic

▶ Flyers goalie Sergei Bobrovsky looks on as Rangers Brandon Dubinsky, centre, Ryan Callahan and Brad Richards celebrate Richards' game-winning goal at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia on Monday.

BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

Rangers rally to beat Flyers in outdoor game

Henrik Lundqvist stopped Danny Briere's penalty shot with 19 seconds left, Brad Richards scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and the New York Rangers rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat the Philadelphia Flyers 3-2 in the Winter Classic on Monday at Citizens Bank Park.

Playing on a rink that stretched from first base to third base, the Rangers made the league's fifth Classic event a memorable one to stay atop the Eastern Conference standings. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sharks sneak past Canucks in shootout

San Jose gets first win of season against conference rival in Vancouver

Michael Handzus scored the shootout winner Monday as the San Jose Sharks beat the Vancouver Canucks 3-2.

Handzus, the only shooter to score, faked twice then beat Canuck goalie Roberto Luongo on the stick side.

Canucks forward Ryan Kesler hit the post earlier in the shootout, while Vancouver defenceman Dan Hamhuis saw his shot hit the far post in overtime.

Torrey Mitchell almost won it for the Sharks in regulation when he took Jamie McGinn's pass in the slot and beat Luongo just after the horn sounded.

Jannik Hansen and Cody Hodgson scored for the Canucks while Benn Ferriero and Patrick Marleau gave the Sharks a 2-1 lead midway through the game.

SHARKS	CANUCKS
3	2

The Sharks (20-11-4) won for the first time against Vancouver (24-13-3) in three tries this season. The Canucks also beat the Sharks in five games in last season's Western Conference final.

Hansen got the only goal of the first period on a 3-on-1 break.

He almost mishandled Hodgson's return pass before firing a low shot under sliding defenceman Jason Demers and past goaltender Antti Niemi from the left faceoff circle.

The goal was Hansen's career-high 12th and ended a six-game drought.

The Sharks pushed back, outshooting Vancouver 17-7 in the second period and tying the game early in the frame after killing a penalty to Demers.

Luongo got a pad on a Ryane Clowe shot but Ferriero backhanded the rebound into the net.

Marleau then made it 2-1 at even strength by taking advantage of another Canuck coverage breakdown.

He scored his 14th by backhanding a rebound behind Luongo after he stretched out his right pad to stop a Justin Braun shot from the side boards.

Niemi preserved the lead into the final period before Hodgson, alone in the slot for a quick release of Hamhuis' pass, tied it with 8:25 remaining in the game. THE CANADIAN PRESS

4 sports

More sports

THE CALGARY STAMPEDERS DEALT QUARTERBACK HENRY BURRIS TO THE HAMILTON TIGER-CATS ON MONDAY, ACCORDING TO TWO LEAGUE SOURCES REQUESTING ANONYMITY. THE STAMPS RECEIVE QB KEVIN GLENN, OFFENSIVE LINEMAN MARK DEWIT AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS.

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Sports in pictures

PHOTOS
1. NED DISHMAN/GETTY IMAGES
2. MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES
3. VEZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

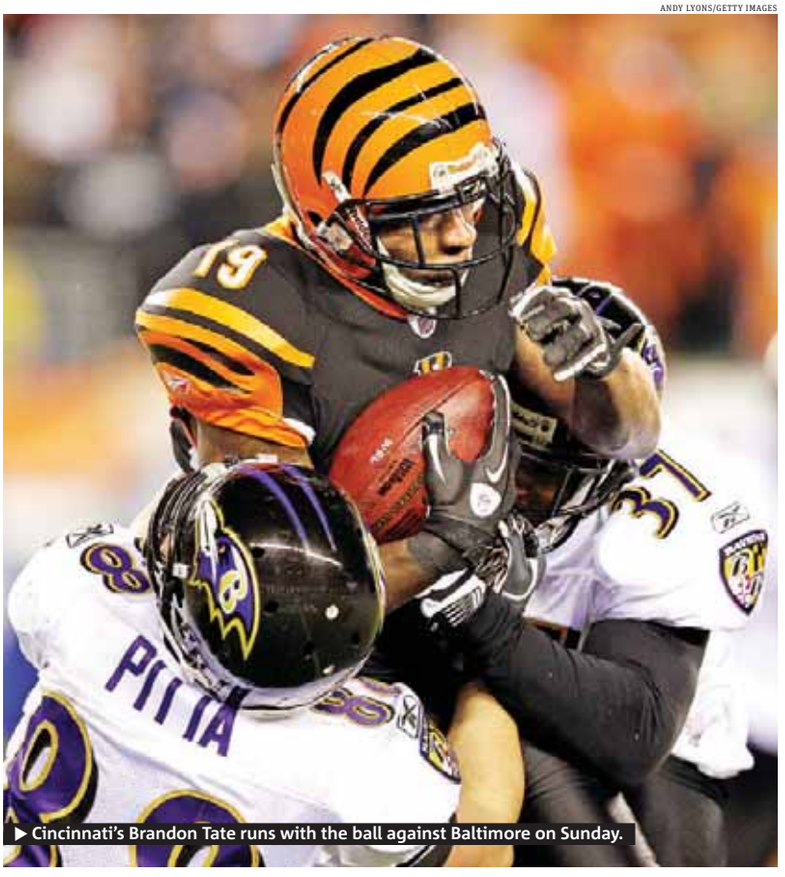
1 Hanley Ramirez says he'll accept a position switch to third base so Miami Marlins newcomer Jose Reyes can play shortstop.

2 The Indianapolis Colts have fired team vice-chairman Bill Polian and his son, Chris, the club's general manager. Owner Jim Irsay announced the moves Monday, one day after the team finished the year 2-14. Head coach Jim Caldwell was retained.

3 The Buccaneers fired Raheem Morris on Monday after his three seasons as Tampa Bay's head coach. Morris went 17-31, including a 10-6 mark in 2010, when the Bucs (4-12) narrowly missed the playoffs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES



▶ Cincinnati's Brandon Tate runs with the ball against Baltimore on Sunday.

Bengals get one more shot

After going 0-7 against other teams that made the playoffs, Cincinnati has something to prove

The Cincinnati Bengals had seven chances to beat a top-tier team during the season, and lost all seven games. Their eighth comes in the playoffs.

It's one more chance to show they belong with the league's elite.

The Bengals' enchanted year has stretched into the post-season, a most improbable finishing place for one of the NFL's youngest teams. They had a lot of things go their way — the schedule was favourable and most of their key players avoided serious injuries.

And, in the end, the Bengals (9-7) got into the playoffs with a lot of help. The Jets, Broncos and Raiders melted down, allowing Cincinnati to claim the final wild-card berth despite a 24-16 loss to Baltimore.

"We definitely haven't played our best game yet."
BENGALS QUARTERBACK ANDY DALTON

They'll play at Houston on Saturday.

"The sky's the limit for our team," offensive tackle Andre Smith said. "I think we're going to take advantage of this week."

They've got the chance because they've been good at beating bad teams.

The Bengals went 0-7 against other teams in the playoffs — AFC North rivals Baltimore and Pittsburgh, as well as Denver, San Francisco and Houston. Their nine wins came against teams that had a combined 43-85 record.

Five of their nine wins came against teams that finished in last place. They beat only one team that finished with a winning record — Tennessee.

"It's just unfortunate that we're losing to some of the better teams," defensive tackle Domata Peko said. "We've been in each of those games, a play or two away from winning those games.

"But we're just happy around here that we're in the dance and have to now prove to the world that we belong here."

Although they haven't beaten another playoff team, they've come close. Often, they've fallen behind and rallied to another near-miss. Their only blowout loss was 35-7 at Pittsburgh. Otherwise, they've lost by two, five, seven (twice) and eight points to the other playoff-bound teams.

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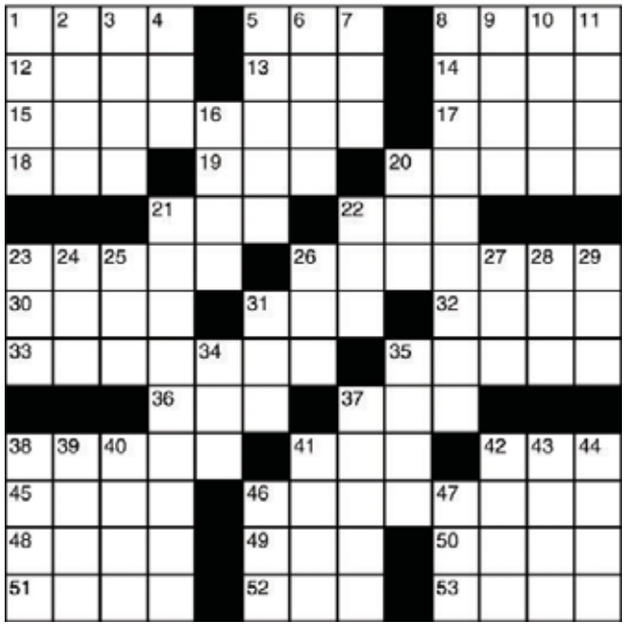
Crossword



Across

1 Level in a hierarchy
5 Lower limb
8 Tranquil
12 Burn soother
13 Hockey surface
14 Hodgepodge
15 Road on a cliff's face
17 Nevada city
18 Greek vowel
19 Carnival venue
20 Beginning
21 Private place to sleep?
22 Compete
23 Cookwear?
26 Guys
30 Back
31 Chicken —
32 Concept
33 Current generator for some engines
35 Confuse
36 A Gabor
37 Ph. bk. data
38 Wooden box
41 Ultra-modernist
42 Periodical, for short
45 Stereo setup
46 City in Ontario
48 "Oh, woe!"
49 Pt. of speech
50 Therefore
51 Impudent
52 Spelling contest
53 Physical

Down

1 Compete on a track
2 Greatly
3 Mrs. Nick Charles
4 Documentary film-maker Burns
5 Within the law
6 Reverberate
7 "Golly!"
8 Roddy McDowall's "Planet of the Apes" role
9 Brewery products
10 Queue
11 Academic
16 Press
20 Lubricate
21 Musician in the brass section
22 Irritate
23 Upper limb
24 Shell game item
25 Tatter
26 Egg — yung
27 Peculiar
28 Become one
29 Utter
31 Sch. org.
34 Previous night
35 Apollo's landing site
37 Chutzpah
38 Bloke
39 Anger
40 Somewhere out there
41 Protuberance
42 Fraternal surname of comedy
43 Plankton component
44 Snatch, with "onto"
46 Taxi
47 Teeny

▶ Last crossword's answer

S	P	A		B	S	C		H	A	L	V	E
H	E	W		B	A	H		A	B	E	A	M
E	R	A		Q	U	A	T	R	A	I	N	S
A	I	R		S	C	R	O	D				
F	L	E	A		E	O	N		S	O	P	H
			G	A	R		Y	O	N	D	E	R
I	D	E	A	L				V	I	E	W	S
S	U	R	V	E	Y		W	A	D			
M	O	R	E		E	P	A		E	M	I	T
				S	T	O	L	E		O	N	E
Q	U	E	S	T	I	O	N	S		I	T	S
B	L	A	K	E		P	U	P		S	E	T
S	T	R	I	P		S	T	Y		T	R	Y

Sudoku

	9		6	1				
	3		9				7	5
		8	4			2		
						7	8	2
9				3				1
8	7	4						
		7			5	1		
3	5				4		2	
				2	6		5	

How to play

Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Last sudoku's answer ▶

9	4	1	2	5	6	3	7	8
7	8	5	9	1	3	6	2	4
6	3	2	4	8	7	9	1	5
8	6	3	1	2	4	7	5	9
1	2	7	5	6	9	4	8	3
5	9	4	3	7	8	1	6	2
2	1	9	7	4	5	8	3	6
4	7	8	6	3	2	5	9	1
3	5	6	8	9	1	2	4	7

Send a KISS

You can now post your kiss, and read even more kisses, online at metronews.ca/kiss.

My Damsel in Distress were you my Princess I was writing to . from your Prince Charming? if so it was my pleasure. and you did make an impression on me thank you. I do hope our paths cross again
FROM YOUR HERO

hey
A long time ago was swimming in dizziness every time we touched. Kisses left me craving, phone calls left me expecting, texting left me wondering. Since then we changed for whatever reasons unknown and faded into yesterday. For a fleeting moment felt like I was in heaven! Ah, the hell with romance and true love. Its all lies. Just a fool who let self be fooled. Foolish
FROM ME

Today's horoscope

For today's crossword answers and for expanded horoscopes, go to metronews.ca

♈ Aries March 21-April 20 It may seem to others as if nothing ever fazes you but in reality you are quite easily upset.

♉ Taurus April 21-May 21 You will splash out on something shiny that catches your eye today, but you may regret it tomorrow.

♊ Gemini May 22-June 21 Think before you act today because if you let your impulses get the better of you there is no telling where it might lead.

♋ Cancer June 22-July 22 It is possible to be too generous for your own good.

♌ Leo July 23-Aug.23 Don't let your personal feelings interfere with what you must do on the work front today.

♍ Virgo Aug. 24- Sept. 22 Someone in a position of authority may be an idiot but they have got the power to make life difficult for you, so watch what you say.

♎ Libra Sept. 23-Oct. 23 A drama could so easily become a crisis.

♏ Scorpio Oct. 24-Nov. 22 A small change you make today could result in huge consequences further down the line.

♐ Sagittarius Nov. 23-Dec. 21 If your life seems complicated it is only because you are making it complicated.

♑ Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 20 Watch out you don't fall heavily for someone who is really not suitable for you at all.

♒ Aquarius Jan. 21-Feb. 18 You may be able to do a particular job better than anyone else but that does not mean you have to do it.

♓ Pisces Feb. 19-March 20. Don't let problems of a domestic nature get you down over the next 24 hours. Most likely by this time tomorrow they will no longer exist, so stay calm and keep smiling.

SALLY BROMPTON

Caption contest

PAT SULLIVAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"I was paintballing and this is how they got me." **ERNESTO GRAVERAN**

PAT SULLIVAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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